PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!

Delayed as the wish is, I do hope it finds each and every Chapter busy with plans for a bigger and better year Hibiscus-wise. A show that is better planned.....and of course larger membership. After all, Hibiscus, as lovely as they are, can be a much happier medium if you meet your friends at your meetings and your picnics. Many wonderful ideas are to be had by mingling with the lovely people that make up the membership of our Society. Of course we should work at the American Hibiscus Society, but we should play with it too. In reality, you will find that your interest is much greater when you find growing and showing Hibiscus a captivating avocation.

Here in the Northern area our winter, up to this point, has been very light with almost no frost. Therefore, so far we have no damage to our plants, however, such bloom as has been courageous enough to come out has not been up to size, color or texture. We are now beginning to plan on taking down our banks and supplying a very heavy charge of plant food to start off growth with a bang. I have heard many predictions of bloom that is to come.....real show stoppers, but in due time we will be able to determine how much conservation went into the forecast.

We want to cheer the fine spirit and effort of those in some of the Southern Chapters that have carried on so splendidly through these dormant months we in the Northern tier have to go through. It is really heartening to find such enthusiasm as some of our members have shown and their efforts to carry forward the Hibiscus banner.

We have a new chapter in the making and it is with great pride and interest that we are going through pre-organization planning. I know every member will wish them God speed and wonderful flowers, plus the satisfaction and happiness so many of us have found in the fellowship of our American Hibiscus Society.

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CULTURE IN NORTH FLORIDA

- Robert H. McCubbin, Jacksonville, Fla.

Now that the prossibility of the freeze damage is about over we can give more thought to getting our Hibiscus out of the so called dormant state. Those cans and pots that have been in sheds, garages, and what have you, should come out and into the ground. Start feeding these plants a high nitrogen content fertilizer at once. Continue this feeding at regular intervals for about 2 to 3 months, all the time making sure that these plants are getting enough water. After that period alternate with organic fertilizer and the high nitrogen. A good fertilizer would be a 6-6-6 with 50% organic or even a top grade of well rotted stable manure. Any plant that has been in the ground all winter must have the banking medium removed and the soil around the plant loosened to let the fertilizer and water get to the roots easily. Make sure all weather damaged parts of the plants are cut back to the point that a good bright green is showing. This, as you may already know is the best indication that the plant is still alive and the possibilities are good that the plant will make a comeback.

Those of you that have had cuttings in boxes as I have had should make sure that they have good roots before putting them in cans or pots. Quart cans or 3 to 4 inch pots are suitable for these little cuttings. They can be moved to larger containers later. It is suggested that a liquid fertilizer be used on any transplant at once to reduce some shock that generally occurs. Be sure that the soil has proper drainage. This also is a good time to top a plant so that new shoots will form in a quicker time.

In early spring keep an eye out for the various insects that are bound to come around to go after those nice tender new shoots. Unless your place is an exception to the rule, they will be on hand. These cool mornings are just right for so many insects that can really do severe damage if not caught in time. Check with your local feed store or nurseryman for the proper insectides to use. Don't try to make one poison do for all insects as that certainly isn't the cure.

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